MOTHER AND OTHERS

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DORWARD

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MOTHER AND OTHERS.

POEMS BY

WILFRID J. DORWARD.

WITH NUMEROUS HALF-TONES FROM THE AUTHOR'S PHOTOGRAPHS.

THE SENTINEL CO.,
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PRELUDE.

Fin-de-siecle song! who has the time
To linger o'er the crumbs that idly fall
From strangely varied feast, these hundred years?
Incense to Beauty, stirring Battle call,
Voices of Love and Grief, in rarest rhyme—
All this your portion. Myriads are my peers;
Enthusiasm great I have not; neither I
Incite o'er much to laughter, or to tears.
Perhaps, indeed, I merit but your sneers.

Yet who, on sighting flame,
For very shame
Not tell?
Who, when the bell,
Sends forth on vibrant air
A warning or a prayer,
Will not
Instant declare:—
"Hear that faint knell?"
When bends prismatic bow
O'er the retreating storm,
Gladly to all sign:—"Lo
Fair weather doth return!"
Sighting the freighted barque
As comes the dark,
Speak those who wait despondent:—
"With the lark
She anchors in the bay;
Wait thou 'till day?"
Though I no treasure bring,

Spare me that witless fling:—
"Fly, lacking wing!"
Critic, myself will try this thing;—
Why think it wrong?
I prove but the old song—
"Few of the few can sing."

TO A BRAVE SPIRIT STILL IN THE FLESH.

(After Reading Warner's "Golden House.")

What dost thou here imprisoned in clay?
The Immortals all long since have grown
Glorious; some stand in heaven, they say,
Some here—mere effigies in stone.

Brave Spirit! who for man's sake, yea
For *my* sake, mercy's sake, stay on,
Whose frail hands all along the way,
Have strengthened those whose strength was gone,

I hail thee, Mortal! Canst thou see
That Love's a Mirage, Life a Breath?
Thou canst?—Then shouldst thou immortal be
On either side the gates of Death.

—The Glen, '96.

A WARD OF THE LEGION OF HONOR.

Seven times stricken on the field!
In one campaign? yes, one battle;
Scarce recovered, under shield,
Toiling,—not for praise or chattel—
Fighting, spurning, buffeting,
Sorrow's Twin, through time, eternal,
Brood of ignorance, want, and sin,
That each year, autumnal, vernal,
Swift in tumult, slow in calm,
Sends ten millions into silence!
Give, O! gilead, of thy balm,
—This no war of ruthless violence!—
Sons of plenty, "lulled by peace,"
Give of both, her hands to strengthen;
Crearar! may thy tribe increase,
Let the glorious roll-call lengthen;
Dead?—then clasp her sister's hand;
What is death—she's used to dying;
In the sable ranks she'll stand,
'Till cut down, with colors flying!

—Feb. 1897.

TRUCE.

Within the silent, long, cool ward,
With fevering pulse and eyes like stars,
His brain, with many fancies stored,
Is rambling back among his wars.

"No merrier song than bugle call!—
No trustier servant than a horse!—
No blither whistle than a ball!—
—When't passes harmless by, of course—

"Who said he frowned on honest toil?
—He'd raided many a farmer's bin;
Or thought, forsooth, he spurned the soil?
—'Twas good to bury dead men in!

"He loved to smell the powder burn!
'Twas manly, striving, men with men!
He toiled his stint, he slept his turn,
He noticed that some fell;—but then

"Men live to die;—the foe—he too;
To drink, to sing, perchance to wed,
Death was his trade; his fate, he knew;
But surely not to die in bed—

"Bed was for those who needed rest;
Got rested, and so rose again
Refreshed and strong; yes, in his breast
The scheme's all there;—but where—but when—

"*His steed has turned into a ship!*
Treason! *her sails are flags of truce!*
The farmer's flail gives him a clip—
Oh! God—you choke me—ah!—I'm loose—"

A nurse glides, noiseless, to his side,
A calming draught holds to his lips,
There's nothing else;—he's on the tide
That naught can stem;—sight, feeling, slips—

The pulses mount, the life-warmth fails,
The doctor's skill can do no more;
The relentless beating of Time's flails,
Has riven the last sheaf on the floor.

The doctor signs, the nurse obeys,
And screens the sight from other eyes,
Ere those bright windows film and glaze.
Ere that faint hectic swoons and dies.

Many thy years, and oft thy use,
Thou battered, dingy, white-gray screen!
Curtaining life's "I win—I lose—"
Still gliding Death and Life between.

Like fluttered rag upon the walls
Quells the besieger's shot and shell,
Thy signal hushes the hushed halls;
Nurses and patients know it well.

* * * *

Cover the fire;—the darkness falls.
Limber the guns;—the city's ta'en.
The parting gleam that night recalls—
Debars, yet tempts to work again—

Flickers a moment behind the screen
—A wreath of smoke, a mist of rain
Glided by gentle hands between—
Of the flag, that signals, "Ceased is pain."

—The Glen, March 14, 1897.

"MAKER TO HER HIGHNESS."*

(A Real Incident.)

In a sumptuous suite in London,
Well upon the route to honor,
High upon the road to favor,
Having dined and read the "Nation,"
Big-Bug "slumbered in his armchair,
Many like him slumbered likewise."

In a little room in London,
In a tenement much larger,
Bread and tea—most' tea—for supper,
Sat a graceful girl of twenty.
Eighteen hours she's smiled to order,
Now the tears could come unbidden;
Eighteen hours she'd handled velvet,
Now she looks upon the threadbare;
Tastes the bitter; feels the hardness.

Ah! the biting teeth of hunger,
Cold, and heat, and gathering sickness,
Waiting on the well, the wealthy,
Feigning smiles and step elastic,
Doomed to pain and self-repression:
And for eighteen hours of labor,
But *eight shillings* at the week's end;
This for lodging, food, and clothing!

---

*With acknowledgments to Dinah Mulock Craik in Murray's Magazine.

THAT SWEET GENTLE PRINCESS

(H. R. H. Alexandra, Princess of Wales.)

Whither flies the young crushed spirit
Freed from toil for sleep or recess?
Let me whisper and I'll tell you,
Two escapes that hound and haunt her,
—Shuddering, ghastly, kin to madness,
Driven out, returning, beckoning,—
Sometimes 'tis the streets—dishonor,
Other times the morgue—the churchyard.

Who could guess it, who believe it?
Pretty, graceful, girl of twenty!
Why, the very silks and satins,
Plushes, laces, that she handles,
These alone belie the story;
Why, the shop has royal patrons!
This indeed proves it a fiction.

Strange, that fact should oft have proven,
Stranger yet than tale of traveler;
For the elegant plush mantle,
She so swiftly, deftly fashioned,
—Fit to grace a Princess' person—
Was indeed for royal shoulders!
Think! if that sweet, gentle Princess,
—She, the mother of young daughters—
Had but known this simple story,
Could but guess its deepest import,
Less perhaps the textile beauty,
Losing—yet to gain distinction,
By remembrance of a mercy,
By membrance of a *justice*,
To the slender hands that wrought it.

—March 15, 1897.

THE WEARING OF THE GREEN.

One of the primal three, so science now declares,
Worn by each shrub and tree, and light the emerald shares,
Ah! that United! Free! Isle of the Patriot's prayers,
Whose flag that color wears!

I've loved the yellow sheen; but the leaf, yellowed, falls;
Golden thy flag has been;—yellow dyed *red*, appalls;—
O! Great and Gracious Queen, grant us the vernal green
Aloft o'er Tara's Halls!

—The Glen, March 17, 1897.

SONG OF THE PINK COCOON.*

(Valley of the Arno, near Florence.)

Quite within a morning's stroll
Of a city and a stream,
Linked forever in the soul
With a Dreamer and his Dream;
Bird-like, nested 'mid the trees
Taking—as who should not?—toll
From the tourist, from the bees,
Planting, tilling, as you please
In the valley, on the slopes
Olive, mulberry, and vine;
Silvio! thy life's like wine!
'Pon my life, I envy thine.
So, I sing, the while you ply
'Neath a matchless Tuscan sky
A quaint, ancient industry.

*With acknowledgments to Janet Ross in Macmillan's Magazine.

A CITY AND A STREAM

DARK AS[illegible]

Industry! some find thee hard;
(More a curse than a reward)
Thou, and I, no grievance claim,
Light and pleasant is the task
In the *Bachaia's* smiles to bask,
Taste her glowing lips' pure flame—
With her pink and golden threads
Twine the silken threads of rhyme,
In a silken zephyred clime.

Industry! may time defend!
All the dowry of the girls,
Dark Assunta's string of pearls
Festive dress—on thee depend.
Skill and time are freely given,
For the rest, they trust in heaven;
For with all man's industry
Everything depends on *thine*,
Spinner of the silken threads;
Of the threads so strong and fine.

'Tis the birthday of Saint Mark
Day propitious; with the lark
Send aloft thy matin song,
(Gladness makes the heart grow strong)
Then commence a service long;
Longer than the fast of Lent:
And if it be illy spent
Full a twelve-month thou'll repent.
(Data follows there—anent)

Dull at first:—thou breedest worms,
Hatch them out in countless swarms;
Hatch them from those precious eggs,
(Kept four days at fever heat)
Give them tender leaves to eat:
Keep their nursery clean and sweet.

By the ounce the eggs are sold;
—Prime Cortona's soaked in wine
Are worth half their weight in gold—
But they come from many a clime;
From Australia, from Japan,
—Monstrous ones from Turkestan—
Every one of some repute,
And a subject of dispute;
Fancied now, or once had been—
Various, to fill varying need:—
Most prefer the rosy sheen
Of the cocoons,—plump and clean—
From Cortona's famous breed.

Day and night they grow and eat—
Tended still with tireless feet,
For thou feed'st them sheaves and sheaves
Of the glossy mulberry leaves;
But their hunger will abate
When the nights have numbered eight;—
Then they'll sleep for twenty hours,
And awake to quickened powers;
Cast their skins, and eat again.

This, repeated, three times o'er
Numbers sunsets twenty-four;
And they grow, and eat the more.

Then they sleep two nights, one day:—
—Let those idle now who may,
Those with silk worms work and pray.
No one more enquires thy health
But instead, thy chance of wealth;
"Morn', Signora! how's the worms?"
"Ah! Assunta, if it storms
Then is all our work for naught.

SILVIA

Pray the Virgin that the sun
Still may shine a few days more,
Then we'll have great winter store;
But the Heavenly Will be done."

See! the worms translucent grow—
Restlessly move to and fro,
Cease to eat—then thou may'st know
Shortly their cocoons they'll spin:
On dry fronds of heath and broom
In a tidy, empty room
Best invite them to begin.
When the room will hold no more
Carefully close and lock the door;
Leave the "*bosco*" all alone,
'Till at least five days are gone.
Meanwhile, sounds are heard within—
Curious sounds, like falling rain;
To disturb the "wood" were sin—,
Let it undisturbed remain:
Sweet the sounds—for thee they spin.

Rest and listen! work is o'er.
But though still outside the door,
Hope and fancy go before
And the "*bosco*" will explore.
Still will Silvia and her maid,
Count their chickens not yet hatched;
Silvio, dreaming in the shade,
Live in houses not yet thatched:
Better so; why plant the thorns
That so flourish in most soils?
If this year brings no returns,
Perhaps the next rewards thy toils.

This, in passing; while we stand
On the skirts of wonderland.

Hast thou ever, over night
Drifted backward from the tomb?
Risen with the morning light
Found the roses all abloom?
Found that hearts still chime like bells
When by love their ice is riven?
Dealt in magic, compassed spells
When the wood-thrush hymned at even?
Come then! Come! thou'rt not alone:
Come! but let us not intrude:
Silvio flings the portal wide,
O'er his shoulder peep inside—
From this distance view the "wood."

All among the heather twigs
Hang the cocoons, big as eggs;
Pink and golden, thick as plums
When the trees escape the pest;
Of *ten* harvests, this the best.

Silvio signs that all is well.
Silvia, voluble becomes:—
"This indeed the sight of sights!
Twinkle they like altar lights
On the Virgin's festival!
Call Assunta, tell the Cure—,
Saint Antonio! thee for sure
I'll remember on thy feast!
Why, there's *scores of three* at least*"—!

* * * * * *

Follower of my muse's pranks
Value not the yield in francs:
Coin the *glances*, pledge the *thanks*,
Gauge the *love*,—not count the money:

(*3 lbs., a kilogramme, worth 5 frs. 20c.)

Outward symbols, some of these—
—Just the *labor* of the bees
Not the sweetness of their honey.
But to thee with insight lent,
(If the fund be not misspent)
This, the perfect valuement:—
Silvia's love and gratitude
To the one her promise wooed—
For the babe her heart beguiled:—
Silvio's solicitude
For the mother,—for the child.

—The Glen, March 19, 1897.

"CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE."

By the gate, within the gateway
Of a City reared with hands,
There's a Cesspool: when seen, straightway
Covered; yet it grows—expands.

When, anon, some fool, unthinking,
To one side the cover tossed,
There were wails as thousands sinking,—
It engulfed the children most.

Boon companions Wealth and Pleasure,
Smug, and portly, passed that way;
(Good is joy and good is treasure.)
Heard I what they had to say.

Stepped the first within the portal—
"Some one's sinking, hear that cry!"
"Friend, the malady is mortal,
None will touch—, we'd best pass by."

Ah! that's so; but why the—nameless
Cannot they keep them out of sight?
Suppose my wife—, its shocking, SHAMELESS!
God! my nerves are not yet right."

So he signaled an Inspector
Of Police to take control:
Jokes were passed: the boon companions
Then continued on their stroll.

Still go on! jocose, unguessing,
'Till the Pestilence sweep thy halls!
While thy Right is Wrong, a blessing
Cannot dwell within thy walls!

Behold thy Blight, thou sodden city!
Thy wronged children curse the morn;
Multiplied, denied even pity,
Or the right to be well-born!

Though the death rate is appalling,
Some survive;—farmed out for hire
In that solitary calling
Where none ask, "Who was thy sire?"

Old, and Youth will turn informer;
Gilt-vice trap them unawares;
"Freeze!" or "Go where it is warmer!"
Sanctimonio scorn their prayers,

And Miss Censor strut above them,
Always the worst that's false relate;
Tell you there is nothing of them
But their curse, legitimate.

And if words so rankle,—blister,—
What of that no *man* can tell,
When as told by Mother, Sister?
After this, who says "No Hell!"

Sister, Brother, in human semblance—
—Born of woman—these shapes that pass;
In virtue of, by that resemblance,
Backward search in a dark glass

And know thy duty! Mentor! Healer!
Bitter truth and torturing leech
Spare not! shrink not, Rot-revealer!
Out of sight—beyond our reach.

And, my Muse! if thou leave ever
Sword of Thought unfleshed, the hilt
Rusted like its scabbard, never
Can *sloth* justify my guilt;

If thou hast lulled *Fear* with *Falsehood*—
Had'st not *Truth* to tell the worst—
Had'st not *Faith* in *Right*, and *Manhood*—
Scorn, to point out those accursed—

Better have been blind and voiceless!
People! Mightiest of the earth
Thunder "NO!" to infamy choiceless;
Childhood free *before* the birth!

And if of that throng uncounted
For which Waugh and Froebel planned,
Torquil spared, De Paul surmounted,
Thou must pass this pallid band,

Blasted, nine times decimated,
Wanting pity, guidance, bread,
Desolate, and Desolated,—
Ashes! cover thou my head.

—The Glen, March 27, 1897.

THE BLACK FROST.

(May 31, 1897.)

At eventide the dallying clouds
Were journeying south.
The vagrant wind
That tossed and teased their whitening shrouds,
Soon tired; and listless, fell behind.

Anon, the star-shine, clear and cold;
No song of thrush or whippoorwill,
The copse, the spruce, their silent fold;
Upon the hill
A hungry fox complaineth shrill
That but he stirs abroad.
Presently all was still.

Then Siva breathed;
Beneath his breath
The garden plot
—A beauteous spot—
Is black in death.

* * * *

Up from the east
Comes the day's prophet-priest,
Peers at the wintry blight askance,
Indignant grows with his advance
And marking blackening fruit and flower;
Before his flashing, withering glance
The blasted victims drop and cower;
—A last sad tribute to his power.

Like cheek dull reddening to a blow
Soul-stinging, but not mortal, lo!
Some of the oaks wear autumn's hues;
As drinks the sun the drenching dews
Creeper and shrub show woundings sore;
The lovely valley's parlor floor
Is strewn with hideous ravished flowers;
Will ever Beauty grace these bowers
Again? Mark six weeks' sun and rain,
The maimed concealed, the slain forgot.
You find it hard to so conceive?
It should not be;
The sun's too hot
Except for lives and growths that live.

THE EUROPEAN TURKEY AND BANTAM.

(1897.)

"See Turkey's bill? well, 'war is war.'"
Ah! thanks! think I've heard that before;
Guess it, you'd never, from the score,
For when it *rains* 'tis said to *pour*.

So this is war? ye common nouns!
This fleet safe anchored in the Downs?
This parleying pomp of Royal Clowns?
These Wants and Wantings, Smiles and Frowns?

This *Thoughtful* pose? 'tis something new!
"I hit him? why, then he hacks you" (!!!)
Perdiction! knave, suppose he do,
If serves the end you have in view?

Far other, red-real war's alarms;
The shattered towns, the burning farms,
"The Greek! the Greek! they come! to arms!"
Light-counted risks, and bankrupt harms,

The smoke of empires on the air,
The shallow trench, sans coffin—prayer,
The giant might of Die-or-Dare,
The mightier Titan of Despair!

—The Glen, June 2.

WHEN ECHO MOCKS.

As shell upon the shore,
That harbors, impotent, the breakers roar,
As sympathetic glass,
Tuned to one note, vibrating if that pass,
As crystal mountain tarn,
Knowing not its depth, but mirroring the fern
And other lightest cause along its rim,
So I, with Life's full goblet in my hand,
Prattle the afternoon;
Give drink the thirsty sand;
Or sip,
The unconsidered froth upon the brim.

A sounding brass,—no more;
A locust in the grass repeating o'er
Uncounted times inconsequential song;
—I do the locust wrong—,
He, pleasures in his strain,
And pauses soon:
I, loathing singer, listener, and refrain,
But failing me of better through sore lack
Of light or love, keep on:—
O! would I could take back
Into unguessed oblivion, thoughts, words (white and black)
And leave past days a silent night and noon.

June 4, 1897.

LIFE'S DISCONTENT.

Out of the Night, long, long before the dawn,
'Fore pipe of bird, or toil or pleasure's call
A something stirs, a breath, a sigh long-drawn,
"If only light would come and lift this pall."

Out of the Dawn, before the wide full day
Seems to fulfillment ripening mood and man,
It grieves again; "This whirling hulk of clay
I see too well,—the stars I cannot scan."

Out of the Noon, before the tempered sun
Flashed from the west his mellowed slanting ray,
Methought I heard: "What if a name I've won?
It rests me not;—silence and darkness may."

Again at Eve, unheralded like dew,
Steals the same muted strain, beyond the ear
Within the heart:—"Contentment? not for you,—
Perhaps beyond—'tis certainly—not here."

—The Glen, '97.

FROM THE POET'S COMMUNITY BLOTTER.

When Philosophy, and the Muse are tired,
When Theosophy, in doubt has expired,
When the dainty lies—sung, not meaning harm,
Which all Poets prize, and with sweets embalm—
Lose their power to charm,
Would you of divorce as the poles afar?
Glance at our Discourse, then look on what we *are!*

Loved? In metred flow; from our lives alone
You might never know love our lives had known.
Joyful? If the smart gotten in the lists
Show not: deep at heart we're all Pessimists.
Hopeful? But to hide from another's gaze
Spectacle that Pride would but deem Disgrace.
So we court, afar, something—myth, or star—
Well content to roam;
But, on coming home
Pour o'er our own blood, all the bitter flood
—Convict load if borne, madness if withstood—
That exiles the good.
Still, being naught, we seem; and, self-cursed, would bless;
Love, a Poet's Theme; Life, a Wilderness.

OUR PICNIC PLACE.

A lattice-screen of trees;
Through the interstices
The sun-gleams slanting fall;
The trout's fine speckled sheen,
Where sucker and dace had been;
The grosbeak's sylvan call.

Thirty-five years agone,
These pine trees were ungrown;
Where that red cedar stands,
In the warm summer sands,
Three happy children played;
Nor guessed that life held shade.

White pine! red cedar! live!
With all the soil can give,
The sunlight too thine own;
Which of the three to-day,
With hurried glance this way,
But feels himself outgrown?

—GLEN, June 5th.

A LATTICE SCREEN OF TREES

CO-OPERATION.

When lusty shoots of alien sap
Encross, so naught of storm can sever,
They creak and groan in windy weather;
When growth at last crowds out that gap,
They cease their jars and weld together.

Men crowd the earth; there's still to eat,
There's still to drink—in moderation,
But if one part the others cheat
"Protecting"—"Cornering," bread and meat,
Famine can bankrupt any nation.

Without tie, man's a tramp, forsooth,
Without two, there was bargain never,
Fell-priced my gain if't means thy ruth,
Let men and nations learn this truth,
Then want and war are done forever.

—August '97.

THE GHOST FLOWER.*

Shadow Dweller! Whose shade art thou?
Ghost of Blooms! what means this murk brow?
Why so pale, 'mid light-born beauty?
Why these weeds? doth tragic duty
Ask the sable badge of mourning,
Thou to living land returning?

Part translucent—as a spirit,
Touched with gold—some hidden merit,
Cowled like monk whose head bowed ever
Saw earth's worms, her beauty never,
Cowled with crape,—as dead, though living,
Tempting naught, no sweetness giving,
Have you message, have you token?
—But—The silence is unbroken.

—August '97.

*Popularly supposed to be found blooming only on unknown graves in the woods.

THE GHOST FLOWER.

BEYOND LOGIC.

A priori, I'm RIGHT, and you wrong,
And, therefore, the *facts* will sustain,—
Besides, my position's so strong
Need I more, while these statements remain?

No reasoner, Wilfrid, I see;
Alone, this your argument shelves;
If base facts and high myths disagree,—
Why, *the facts need sustaining themselves!*

JUDA DISPERSED.*

The true cosmopolites they stand to-day,
Through centuries, since Titus' bloody reign,
When Juda mourned five hundred thousand slain,
And shattered present hopes unburied lay—
Dead, not at rest—above ground still they say,
—A lust of empire hid 'neath greed of gain—,
First and alone; 'till time—not far away—
When ties dissolve and jumbled creeds decay,
And men—just men, as kings no longer reign—
Known less by birthplace than descent and blood,
Shall elbow on the soil, and swarm the flood

*Acknowledgments to J. H. Bridges, Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

With sail; all nations cosmopolitan:—
Until that day this people stands apart,
In weird prospective back to the dim dawn
Of history; high in literature, and art
Of healing, matching brain and brawn
On field of death with nations proud and bold—
'Twill never all be told by Gentile muse;
No matter—'twill be told, rather *retold*
Eternally; the eye canont refuse
A history, writ so legible in blood.

'Tis blood, blood, blood, it colors all my rhyme,
The pound of flesh exacted still with gain
From "Christian dogs"; considered but sublime
And awful retribution for the slain—
The tortured slain—of Christian fire and sword,
Victims of hate's too cunningly forged word,
Of the "Stabbed Host," and children crucified;
(The best historians say the accusers lied,
Though in every Christian country they were heard.)
Nor all in ages dark before our time;
It dyed Damascus in this century's prime
With frightful carnage; later sons, sore tried,
In parts even now are driven up and down,
Unless they serve (in coin) the King and Crown.

An impressive figure this within our ken,
Jew of the middle centuries, fourteen-ten.
Full beard if old, of plausible address,
His gait and mien distinctive now as then,
His face a monument of storm and stress,
Plague, Famine, War, Captivity;
His calling various as the forms of toil
In every land, and often on the sea,
—All but the simple tilling of the soil;

But there is reason strong this last should be.
Acquiring always, suffered but to keep
What he could hide and safely hold in hand,
Small wonder gold and gems were dear, land cheap,
—A farm, you cannot hide it, or demand—,
Besides, he could not own, scarce rent, the land.
So, though he loved his family, creed, race,
Remembering sore he was compelled to give
A princely sum for liberty to live,
He'd cheat the dissolute Gentile to his face;
And hold that usury is no disgrace,
Therefore, where gold was changed, he found his place,
And to this day his brethren there you'll find,
Despised, feared, hated, courted of their kind.

Banker to bankrupt prince, matching his greed
Thrice over, yet with honesty and thrift
To ripe its fruits, while facing pits and snares
To trap the gains, the gainer turn adrift,
Physician to the ills (as needs, as must)
Of Popes and Crowned Heads, trusted on their stairs,
Denied the rights of men that safeguard trust,
He dreamed of vengeance, to his tyrant lied—
I am not his apologist;—if seek
Ye Israel's history, then ask him speak
Who represents her Faith, Intolerance, Pride,
Juda! still Alien where'er she 'bide,
Nation within the nations ramified!

"I am a Jew, forever I'm a Jew,
Perhaps my tongue is palsied, because old?
Perhaps 'twere better to speak false than true,
Not fact but fable to the world unfold?
Not so! the story's too heroic,—vast—
—'Tis somewhat known, indeed, 'neath Christian sway—

This, better told, I'll swiftly hurry past,
To the Dispersion and the evil day;
We need not fear the truth, the Gentile may.

"And, recollecting, as the thought takes wings,
In evil yesterday, in our proud past,
In long descended Prophets, Warriors, Kings,
A straightened nation in the furnace cast—
An anguished nation driven forth at last—
Jehovah, Lord! through all we kept thy word;
Our Father's God! remember us these things.

"Fought we the Romans? yes, 'twas even so.
To Freedom's children liberty is life;
Captivity is death, or worse than death.
So when the cursed load made scant our breath,
And Roman eagle turned to carrion crow
Or vulture, feeding on our vitals, strife
—Not loved, but choiceless chosen—stalked our land;
We fired the torch, broke lance, and fleshed the brand,
We charged their legions, met them hand to hand—
Saw a devoted, ever narrowing band,
Yesterday routed, with dawn take new stand;
Live to hate life, and die to dye the sand—
Ah! it was bitter once again to kneel!
Sons of the freeborn, *these* be those who feel
The fettered wrist, the gyve, the ball-and-chain,
Awful the plaint from 'neath the conquering heel,
'Cursed are the living, blessed are the slain.'

"The nation fell beneath their ruined towers
Like Sampson, dealing their last desperate stroke;
And the torn remnant, through the dust and smoke,
Their tombs profaned, their temples desolate,
Plague at their heels, a price upon each head,

Fled wildly on a famine attended road;
Forsook a land where honey and milk once flowed,
—Now desert—to the conqueror and the dead.

"Thus Juda sunk for centuries from men's sight.
The stricken hide for cure; without the light
The germinating seed prepares the way
For harvest;—then the ripening—in our might
Not yet—but—following night there comes the day.

"After long centuries came a gray, slow dawn
O'ercast and threatening, upon our race.
We'd toiled the highways, multiplied apace,
We came with peaceful labor, met much scorn—
Not for the labor's price—oh! no,—our thorn
Their rose;—condoned the unrighteous chase—
Their God ordained our life-blood should be drawn.
Defeat we'd known, we had not known disgrace;
But now, upon our brows, unguessed, we read,
A stigma, a reproach, in every face.

"*Allowed to sojourn, not to make a home!*
The tyranny political of Caesar's Rome
Had passed; its carcass lay like Caesar,—dead;
Religious tyranny now reigned instead.
Through one weak judge a people stand or fall?
A mob—a rabble—a whole nation's shame?
Justice! we ask but justice; hear our call
O! God! if few did sin, all bear the blame.

"No pen can picture what our race have borne.
No tongue can tell it, mock it not with words.
Death spelt in many ways, hate, treachery, scorn,
Theft, slander, hope deferred, the alien's lot,
The right denied us to prove with our swords

Whether our men had manhood; every spot
Of Christian Europe, soon or late the scene.
And why? *Because we're Jews!* Indeed, why not?
We're outcast, leper, everything unclean.

"But mark: our gold ne'er soiled the whitest palm;
It silenced scruples, played the healing balm
To those nice souls not sure we ought to live—
Whose doubts returned when we'd no more to give—
When, as a "sponge," we'd nothing further yield,—
"Of Florence gold of good and lawful weight
Himself and wife must fourteen pieces pay
Each year." The rental, not of mart or field,
But right of residence on French estate
In Fourteen Hundred. Craftier still the way
In merrie England; read and understand
The "Jewish Charter" from the kingly hand
Of the third Henry:—*"Let no Jew remain*
In this our land unless he serve the King,—
As soon as child is born of either sex
In some way let it serve us. Neither vex
With tolls, wine measurings, customs, combats, fees,
In towns allotted their use; in these
Being they are things that to the Crown belong
No man must hinder, tax, or do them wrong:
For they our chattels are, our instruments.
Wherefore, their lives we enjoin you to maintain."

"But this, though slavery, protected life;
There is another page, 'twere well to scan,—
A glorious page, some think; when fiercely rife
The spirit of the Crusades; hear one man*
Who doubtless wrote of what he saw and heard:
'That season a great multitude from every land

*Chronicler of Treves.

Both men and women, toward Jerusalem turned,
Love of their faith and God within them burned,
Panting to suffer death, or tread the necks
Of unbelieving Moor, or Turk, or Jew,
Or else compel them to accept the Word;—
Of their approach the Jews of Treves heard—'
—The story sorely doth my spirit vex—
Her sires, gray-headed, stifling their own groans
Sheathing sharp steel in their own flesh and blood,
Her dames, their bosoms crowding full of stones
To cast them head-long in the weltering flood;—

"Better our women welter in the deep,
Than blot their chastity's unspotted page;
Better my child in Abraham's bosom sleep,
Than live, a mockery to the Christian's rage.

"Four out of seven thousand families
Were butchered at Toledo, Spain; at York
In "Merrie England" awful was the deed—
At Mayence, Germany, a thousand bleed—
'The blood of martyr is the Church's seed'
Then count our slain, and see our sons arise,
Yea, even legions, all the earth around,
Judge then of all, who cumbereth the ground?
Consider what in charity is spent—
The credit to the humbler brother lent—
The oppressed assisted to a kindlier land—
A nation's debt transferred to other hand
With a pen's stroke:—business integrity
That floats the nation's commerce on all seas,
While others "liquidate," run "corners," "squeeze"—
Consider Christian Matron's idle ease,
Slothful impatience of maternity
And all the rest; consider the unblest

Black blot of hell on civilization's face;
All Christian girls;—just put it to the test,
Point me the harlot of our creed and race.
Behold a Faith that counts the centuries,
And sees beliefs arise and crumble down
As change the nations; some of high renown,
Others, still-born, or ruthlessly snuffed out
For fear their light might dim the foe's dull gleam,
While Juda stands, exclusive, proud, no doubt,
But not as Persecutor; never crossed the seas
To *force* the unbeliever to believe;
Never placed upright alien under ban—
While weighing Faith, also appraised the man—
Passed not the parable of Mote and Beam—

"But hark! toward Zion many pilgrims stray,
Can it be Dawn? O! throbbing heart conceive
From north, from south, one, all, nor bond, nor free,—
The mist, the dew, the rain, all reach the sea.
Enough is said: not of the eyes this sight.
Behold we patient watch the still closed door;
Our type, belief, endurance, endures;
This, with God's favor, surely ensures
Juda Dispersed will gather in her might,
The earth, God's country, hers as heretofore."

ONLY WHEN DEAD.

Through tiny goblet from the spring
I mix the poppy's alkaloid,
And bear it to the sufferer's side,
Who quaffs it down:
Then watch the small flood quench and drown

The sense's torture; flitteth sight and sound,
The panting engines that refresh the blood
Remit their labored gasp—pulse soft and slow;
The weary, clutching fingers silently let go;—
Behold he sleeps! a dead-yet-living barque
On Lethe's flow.

Not-known is life, forgotten, Death,
Past, Present, Future, all gone dark;
Yet is each sense, though drugged, (list to his breath)
Key in the lock, while lives the vital spark;
This dark, dumb mansion still the sense's home.

And listening, looking, pondering, further afield I roam:—
Where is the soul? doth stray beyond these walls?
If so, returning, nothing she recalls.
Perhaps in sense her sentience lies?
—As with vibration, music dies;—
I make no claim.
This much is clear:—
While the drugged senses swoon, she sight defies;
An hour, a day, a month, a year,
It were the same.

Perhaps forever 'twere the same; or stay!
Doth dissolution grant divorce from sense
Dissolved, yet furnish flight from hence,
All mystery solved? Presume not to deride
He who, impelled to guess, must guess and fail.
Not wisdom in her day,
Humility, nor Pride,
Not I, who sit beside,
Nor he, on Lethe's tide, not ours the view
Beyond the Veil;
Only the Dead. And never one doth life renew
To tell the tale.

—January, 1898.

TO THE MEMORY OF D. M. C.

I sing a maid by birth and nature free;
Of British matron honored and beloved
In every land where Freedom's breath hath moved;
Of dauntless girlish heart,
That championed the Right
With nothing but the might
Of a just cause:
Pledging herself, her art
—Nature's one, lavish dower—
To bear a trust bestowed on sturdier frame,
—Dishonored, to his shame;
Of intellectual power
That struggling, indignant, in the mart
To sell her song, and buy the loved one's bread,
Would also win the laurel for her head;
Of love, and sacrifice,
Soothing an ailing mother's dying bed,
Looking with young moist eyes
On the unfriended poor,—scarce clothed—half fed;
Supporting to the end her charges three;—
Such is my song.

And fairer chivalry
Ne'er touched to greatness, pulses swift and strong.
The generous ire, intolerance of wrong,
The earnest plea, nice-fitted to the hour
And its portentious load,
Arraigning both law-breaker, and the laws
That court abuse of power;

D. M. C.

The sage advice, the pitying, just reproof,
The noble rage that scorns to stand aloof
For fear of fingers soiled;
The heart unspoiled
Tho' dusty path and empty hall were toiled,
Less cheered than cheering, on the upward road,
All this and more; and as the morning shine
The midday chapters glowed.

But I fail of the beginning:—
(Not through her we know the story;
Not a sign, and not a token,
Thought or word, as writ or spoken;)
Silence, dutiful, did cover
The ignoble action over.

Touch it gently, as is fitting.
But if told at all, 'twere fitter
Plainly spoken; not unwitting
There is sweet within the bitter.

Twenty summers had not known her
When she chose her path, and in a
Blaze of love and indignation,
Stood between an ailing mother
And a most ungentle father;
Sacrificed her life for others—
For a mother and two brothers.

Did the true ideal suffer
From this first eclipse? Say rather
It grew brighter; you can smother
Little, puny aspirations;
But our young and glowing writer
Knew the heroes of the nations.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters."
Fairer than her fancies daughters,
True to love, a ceaseless giver
From the heart, a crystal river
Gliding onward, unrepining,
See! upon its bosom shining
Comes her bounty and with increase.
Happy Wife and Wedded Lover,
Now her maiden cares are over.

Other cares around would cluster;
Those who knew her they could trust her
Fund of love not all expended;
Gracious service ne'er remanded;
And the blissful years extended,
And the fuller life expanded.

— — — —

October! how the years can steal away!
And we do always count another, where
The last has been so fair.
Who thinks of winter when love warms the heart?
The house, and all, in bridal disarray
Blithely looked forward to the wedding day.
But it was not to be:
Who can foreshadow where the life-streams part?
On this last morn, both from forebodings free,
They parted lovingly; the bride to-be—
Their daughter—smiled; she, lingered on the sill,
Fondly remarking, they were lovers still;
He, cheerfully returning after noon,
Found the Great Change his guest;
And the loved one, at rest.

— — — —

I've sung of one I loved, tho' sight-unseen;
Little 'tis I can tell; her wish had been
Her friends should still respect her privacy.

Many did weep, even this side the sea.
But her voice dwells amongst us; loving, we
Reading the lines and 'tween them say, "that's she."
Naught breaks this spell; and further bear with me
Thou who didst wish her well; upstirreth! see
That the long toil for truth, and pledge unbroken,
So near her heart, so eloquently spoken,
Cause of her sisters—suffer not by thee.
Her life, her death, a lovlier cannot be:—
Firm friend, true wife, sweet sister, loving daughter,
She sleeps in Keston Churchyard o'er the water,
But leaves the world her priceless legacy.

—The Glen, January, 1898.

THE "IMMORTAL DREAM."

A child of song as beautiful as morn,
Glorious in strength, imperial, first-born,
Approached Olympus, careless made his bow—
"Give me a chaplet that I bind my brow."

The Gods (who ofttimes fooled, or angry, crushed;)
Tranquil regarded him until he flushed;
"Thy limbs are straight, thy record is unspoiled,
But this?—go to! thou hast not even toiled."

He hurried forth, a fire within his brain,
He swam the sea, he cleft the earth in twain,
Then to the Mount; the Gods heard him unmoved;
"The work is done, but ill; it was not loved."

He next appears amid the ferns and flowers
Of a rare garden; heedless of the hours,
Careless of fame; friends say:—"that forehead high
Should wear the laurel"; but the Gods deny

The badge is won, yet hint perhaps it can;
He loves, but has not suffered; every man
Of woman born shall press against the thorn;
If *then* he sings—
Before another morn
The tempest gathered in its frenzied arms
Leaf, bud, and blossom, and crushed out their charms,
The poet's voice still sounds, still melody;

And those about him amourously cry:—
"What more can God or mortal ask? decide
He wears the crown." The Immortal ones replied:—
"Thy hurry is too great; wait—let him die."

—January 31, 1898.

SELF CONTROL.

(Chicago, 1895.)

'Twas a wild scene of rescue and of slaughter;
The engine's throb—high pressure; trumpet sound;
The blistering firemen shrieking, "water! water!"
The senseless rabble cumbering the ground.

Beside me in the press there stood a horse;
His smoking flanks and hotly heaving sides
Witnessed him first over the urgent course:
The snake-like hose wherein the quencher glides,

Beneath his chest, unequal to the strain,
Under the awful pressure burst in twain.
A shudder coursed his frame, the eyeballs glared,
The feet were braced, the red-hot nostrils flared,

Then, 'tho unfastened, stood the steed like stone.
The crowd, in panic, hither, thither blown,
Trampled each other in their selfish haste:
Had he, our friend, his courage so disgraced,

Many had perished 'neath that steel-shod hoof.
Did he distinguish on yon tottering roof
Masters or brothers? Give him all the doubt
The brave fire-fighter, 'till he muster out.

—March 3, 1898.

THE NEWER CHIVALRY.

Hast thou seen a warrior bright,
Clad in mail, a thing of might,
Challenging, for wrong or right,
Some hot-headed, luckless wight,
Past wounds yet scarce healed?
Long, long vanished is the sight.
But before me as I write,
Athlete-framed, accoutred light,
Knowledge, sword and shield;
Calm and cheerful, sworn to fight
Death, that spector of affright,
Nor with life to yield;
Standeth he, our modern knight,
On the same old field.

Quick his midnight couch he leaves,
Snaps the dream-thread fancy weaves,
Passes 'neath the rotting eaves
Of the hovel, and reprieves
Some poor soul, 'tho not for long:
Spite of him and death bereaves!
Not his will the orphan grieves—
Widowed heart in sorrow heaves—
Health and hope his song;
Ask him not what he believes,
In the harvest count his sheaves—
Else you do him wrong;
And 'tho flesh and bone he cleaves,
'Tis pity makes him strong.

Ill, then work and want are ill;
Treading, treading in the mill—
Grinding slowly, slowly still—
Life's spring torrent now a rill—
Fractures slow to mend;
Failing sight, and weakening will—
Yet they both must serve—until—
When both purse and strength are nil,
Wanting, who can spend?
Deafness, blindness, do not kill;
They but flaw the cup, and spill—;
Who will hand extend?
When Adversity doth refill
That cup, who is thy friend?

March, 1898.

STORY OF THE BAB.*

I.

Introduction.

In the far east, where morning on the race
Slow dawned, but left scant record of its light,
In later day famed for unchanging laws,
In latter years relapsing into night,
A generation ere our Civil fight,
A youth of nineteen, of such time and place
Knelt, but much doubted, and for scarce-known cause,
At Prophet's shrine, in Mecca's holy place.

*From *"Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale,"* by M. le Comte Gobineau, with acknowledgments to Mary F. Wilson, in Contemporary Review.

Mohammed Shems-Ed-Deen! thou voice apart!
Hafiz of Shiraz! would that thou wert here!
Stringer of Orient Pearls! thy artless art
Could trace this history through its windings clear
From mouth to source, and sing it but to charm:
The western voice is rough—not meaning harm,
The western voice is cold—our winters long;

Yet—Tigris flows; the murmurs of her song
Still permeate the perfumed eastern air;
And with such theme, the bard will not despair:
Will rather hope, if any chance to read
They will remember, (tho some may invade
The heroic east, in very flesh, or deed)
'Tis a far country, where he hath not strayed:—

Nor yet forget, that lacking much the will
To clog his verses with unwilling rhymes,
Or deck theology with plume and frill,
Bald is the line, verse worse than blank, sometimes.
A greater bard had willed it otherwise:—
Such as he is, he offers of his best;
If he bring heroes' image to the eyes,
The reader's heart will surely do the rest.

II.

The Leaven.

Tarrying at Bagdad on his homeward way,
Mirza Ali Mohammed thought to stray
Aside and visit Koufa, where the brave
Son-in-law of the Prophet found a grave
'Neath the assassin's hand. Amid the gloom,
Silence, and desolation of the ruined mosque,

He meditated many days, and tossed
On sleepless pillow through the midnight hours;
Stirring within he felt the prophet's powers;
Should he declare it? should he strive to win
A people—his own people—from their sin?
The crumbling archways mutely spake of doom—
Perhaps he also would find a tomb.
Were these strange visions that so filled his mind,
This station so exalted 'mong his kind,
Worthy the risk? His answer you will find
Along the way—he looked not more behind.

As slowly winds the caravan along
Upon the journey, by the evening fire,
With story, prayer to Allah, sacred song,
He mingles tidings of the new desire
Soon to find welcome in the hearts of men,
Himself the steward of the precious seed:
—Drink, if athirst, is measure of our need—
The skeptic marveled much at what he heard:
The waiting heart responded to his word.
To Shiraz come, (his birthplace, not outgrown)
He writes a journal of his pilgrimage,
And comment on the Koran; many sage
And precious hidden meanings, there were shown.

Like unto one who kindleth a fire
That first consumeth what is near and dry,
But soon, outreaching, flaunts its head on high,
Girdleth the oak, and ever leaping higher
Wrappeth the pine upon the mountain brow
In sheets of flame, thus Mirza doeth now.
In public still he owns the Prophets' laws,
Yet—wins disciples to a teaching strange:—

He is the *Bab*, "the Door," the only one
Through which men reach the knowledge of their God.

One God, eternal, changeless as the truth,
The source of all, to whom all shall return,
Made manifest to men by messengers—
Moses, The Christ, Mohammed, even he—
Each one the medium of a higher truth
Than that brought by his predecessor, 'till
A greater one than all shall come at last—
Revealer, "He whom God shall manifest,"
Who shall preside upon the judgment day,
When all the good shall be made one with God
And evil blotted out. This his belief.
He banned polygamy, forbade divorce;
Enjoined benevolence and honest toil;
Upraised the woman—bade her go unveiled;
Cherished with tenderness the little child;
Was blameless in his intercourse with men;
Kind and considerate to one and all.

And, in addition, he was wondrous fair;
His voice was music, winningly he smiled;
He could not part his lips for hymn or prayer
But hearts stirred to their depths; he reconciled
All truths; if coming, some decried,
As surely eulogized, departing thence—
Even the unconverted testified
Beyond conception was his eloquence.

The record's very legible to-day—
Of his first converts scarcely one not slain.
They perished in unsanctioned, needless fray,
Or fiendish ingenuity of pain;
The martyr's steadfastness illumined all,
Whether of manhood, womanhood, or youth,
Whether from hovel or from regal hall,
They died for what they held to be the truth.

'Twas not the ignorant most espoused his cause,
But Sheiks and Moullas, learned in the laws,
Leaders of men themselves, slow to be led,
Who pledged the heart obedient to the head,—
Houssein Boushrewyeh, a strong man of war;
Hadgy Mohammed, reverenced near and far;
And last, yet first, upon the Prophet's side,
Moulla Mohammed's bride, the city's boast,
Her mother's idol, and her father's pride,
The "Crown of Gold," renamed "Gourret-ûl-aïn,"
The lovely "Consolation-of-the-Eyes."

The cause had won not such another prize.
She weeps—her hearers drop their tears like rain;
She pleads—and acclamations load the air;
The face transformed, the outpouring, fervid prayer,
The filmy, fretted sunlight of her hair
Are hid no more,—the veil aside is flung;
The wild bees nectar dripping from the comb,
Not sweeter than the accents of her tongue.

Words cannot tell the horror and dismay
Among her kinsfolk; she was led astray
They said, her duty lay not there;
They strove, entreated, threatened—would she *dare*—
She snapped the bond of lesser good and ill;
The "Sent of God" her mission must fulfill.

Young wife of nineteen hundred, born to ease,
Who claimeth understanding more than these,
Owneth the Word (*she* had not heard it) "He
Who loveth father—mother, more than Me,
Is still unworthy of Me," look and see
To act its spirit, and as heartily!

Disciples multiplied with every day,
Each hour the teaching strange gained broader sway;
The Moullas knew this quickening worked them harm,
The magistrates began to take alarm.
Two messages were hurried to the Crown,
In hopes before too late to put it down;—
"He undermines Religion," saith the first;
"He undermines thy Throne"—this last the worst.

The teacher, fain to battle for his own,
Dispatched a counter message to the Throne:
"Let me," saith Mirza, "face my lord the King,
And all the Moullas of his broad empire;
Their lives are dissolute—a nameless thing,
Their words are barren, and betrayed their trust,
'Twere well their pride were humbled to the dust.
If I, as sent by God, new truth can name,
If I replace a lower with a higher,
Silence the Moullas, and make good my claim
To teach the people, let them then retire;
If otherwise, I cause will not deny,
And, please the King, am willing so to die."

Much troubled were the King and all his court;
'Twere well to check the clergy's arrogance,
'Twere ill to stir dissention; and to chance
Fierce revolution in the last resort.
Enjoin the Bâb to silence; let him rest
Within his walls at home; let bickering cease;
The country needs new doctrine less than peace.
Thus the King counselled; and the Bâb obeyed.
Not so his followers: Wherefore seek the shade?
The sun doth shine, we but reflect his light;
We seek no conflict:—if it comes—we fight.

III.

In the Mazenderan.

High on the mountain, forest all around,
A fortress springs like magic from the ground.
Only for this, and the grim stacks of arms,
'Twere thought a picnic from the valley farms;
The children prattle and the maidens sing,
The matrons dip the bucket at the spring,
A gathering place in front the axmen free,
The curious pitch their tents continually
Adown the valley, wellnigh to the plain;
They thought to come and go—but they remain.

The warlike Houssein drilled upon the sward;
The learned Balfouroushy preached reward
Exceeding to the slain in holy war;
The Consolation-of-the-Eyes once more
In sweet, persuasive, eloquent refrain,
Told of their hopes, again and yet again.

A thunder cloud doth sudden shade the plain.
The King was dead; now was the time to rise,
Ere they recover from their first surprise;
Within a year resistance will be vain,
And he, the Bâb, a world-wide empire gain.
The Moulla Houssein warmly thus explains,
The ruddy frenzy working in his veins.

Houssein! thou doest not well! slight good, great harms,
Subjecting women and frail babes in arms
To chance of war, its horrors and alarms.
Thy master sanctions not resort to force;
Thy raft once floated on blood's reeking tide,
And chance of gales determine its course.
Too late! Armed Bâbists flock from every side,
And join his standard, full two thousand strong.

Events succeeding, hurry them along;
Of different temper is the new crowned King;
The new Prime Minister is charged to bring
This budding madness to a speedy end
By force; he doth immediately send
To the Mazenderân to clear the land
Of Bâbists, and at once; the grandees say
It shall be done; we start this very day.
Easy to promise, easy to command,
And soon at Houssein's gates the soldiers stand.

These first were routed, and their leader slain.
Consumed with rage the Minister was fain
To send an expedition from the court—
Prince Medy-Kouly-Mirza, with full power
To levy soldiers, and to raze the fort;
A Kurdish chieftain volunteered his aid,
And with much brag and jest the start was made.

Behold them toiling up the steep defiles,
Where winter lurketh even while summer smiles,
Passing from tropic vale, within the hour
To forest, rocky steep, eternal snow;
Jaded to death, they stumble on the foe—
Right in their path, an enemy unseen,
Uncounted—'twas the blinding mountain storm.

The wearied chieftain as the evening fell,
(Advance impossible for foot or horse,
As through the drift they could not see the course)
Sought refuge in a hamlet near at hand;
Each in the medley strove to keep him warm—
The sentinels, benumbed, no tales could tell—
A chartless camp, the whirling snow between.

Forth from their fastness, steals a chosen band—
Three hundred men, with Houssein at their head.
As jungle tiger, stealthy is their tread,
Inured to weather, to the mountain bred,
They fell resistless on the sleeping host:
The baggage-laden nobles suffered most—
Two princes of the blood, and many a chief
Torn from their stirrups ere they plied the spur,
Received a last attention, sharp and brief—
Were trampled under foot like common clay
By friend and foe; and all that frantic stir
Of horse and foot, drew horror from the night.

The gloom forbade defense, but favored flight;
Prince Medy-Kouly-Mirza broke away
With many, but without their arms and stores.
Bitterly, long, his losses he deplores;
Sight of his fear spreads panic everywhere—
That Houssein is a God many declare;
Fresh troops were levied—not with ease obtained;
The prince again advanced—naught else remained
Unless to speedy death he were resigned;
Of evils two, the least he will prefer—
The foe's before—perdiction close behind,
—Wrath of the terrible Prime Minister.
Another sortie in the dead of night—
A scene of blood; but by the torches light
Houssein exposed himself to marksmen's view—
"Mark yonder man who wears the turban green?
Aim thou at him." Both marksmen's aim was true;
Disaster comes their victory between.
Houssein, sore wounded, ready to expire,
Calmly directs his followers to retire
In perfect order, through the opposing bands,
The castle reached, he lurches from his horse,
Naught can avail the skill of human hands.

Who shall inspire them, who shall guide their course?
Alas! none other—'tho as brave remain—
Could compensate for such a leader slain.
He died exhorting all to steadfast trust,
Bid them not mourn—he would return again
In one form or another, from the dust.
And so the frantic struggle is renewed.

Terrible was the wrath of court and King
When four months later, still they're not subdued.
Prince Medy-Kouly-Mirza is recalled;
A sterner general is at once installed;
The cannons thunder and the rifles ring,
Yet not on these alone the leader counted,
Famine will aid—the besieged are short of food.
The fear of shot and shell they had surmounted,
This dread, compelled more than unnumbered foes.
No blade of grass within the enclosure grows,
The trees are barked, the leather sword belts boiled,
The grave of Houssein's charger (like their chief
Buried with fitting honors) for relief
At last with much misgiving is despoiled.
Some have deserted, others, tried in vain,
And 'twixt indignant friends, and foes were slain;
A dauntless handful still the fortress hold;
Their lives seem charmed; to break the charm, 'tis told
For lead, one marksman substitued gold;
At last the barricade in ruins falls;
The fortress, nothing but dismantled walls;
The trench, choked with the dead, can now be crossed
By trampling on this torn and silent host.

But the besiegers were not satisfied
To capture but the slain, so they decide
To offer life to all who now will yield.
Perhaps to wife and mother they appealed,

Perhaps these men of valor knew not doubt;
So, through the victors, silently filed out
The battered remnant, to their curious view;
Two hundred of two thousand—more or less—
Men—living skeletons, a ghastly crew—
Women, of all things womanlike bereft—
Children, alas! with little semblance left
Of human babes, but in their helplessness,
The victors furnished them with tents and food,
With clothes and service—all that they require;
And then—black tale of horror—in cold blood
The morn saw mother, daughter, babe and sire
Slain, with unspeakable barbarities.

This awful deed of blood to heaven cries;
Quenched is the fire in the Mazenderân,
Only to blaze forth further to the east;
Mohammed Ali is their warrior-priest,
And fifteen thousand men his ranks contain.

'Twere useless repetition to recall
The heroic campaign, to its fore-doomed close.
Not even these can meet unnumbered foes—
Slaying and slain, but in the end they fall.
'Twas as the last: unparalled disdain
Of fear, high hopes, stupendous feats of arms,
The ever-strengthening, ever-tightening chain
Of the investment, forays and alarms,
The fallen leader, and the failing bread,
The thousands wounded and the thousands dead.
'Till, under solemn promise, signed and sealed,
Of liberty and life—at last—they yield.
And just as truly was the promise kept;
Butchered like vermin, from the muzzle swept
Of hot-breathed cannon, three were further spared
To grace the triumph; then their limbs were bared

To executioner's lancet, and their blood
Slowly, drop upon drop, with life outflows;
And close beside, exultingly there stood
The grim Prime Minister, to mark the close.

Glut ye with blood to-day! thine own shall turn
In horror to the heart, as swift and stern
An avenging human fiend gloats o'er thy fall!
These last heroic three foretold it all:
The royal master will reward thee not—
Thy bloody zeal will win but similar doom—
Even by this very road;* above thy tomb
These names will flourish when thou art forgot.

IV.

Death of the Bab.

A patient prisoner 'tween his own four walls,
Mirza, the Bâb, had passed these many days.
A man of peace, nor troubled what befalls,
He worketh calmly; hastens, nor delays
The end, now long foreseen—that he must die.
He doubtless heard the trumpet from afar,
—Waged in his name—of bloody civil war;
No slightest sanction had they from their chief;
He even viewed the sacrifice with grief;
But left the burden, to the One on high.
The armed hostility, as has been shown,
Had finally been conquered, and put down;
The smouldering under foot had greater grown
All through the country, and in every town.
This could not last—it would break forth again,
Uncalculated evils in its train;

*Mirza Taghy had his veins opened by royal order in 1852.

This bootless waste of treasure and of men,
The life and sinew of the country drain;
Behold! one pestilential fellow stands
Accountable for all—he's in our hands—
Strike at the root—below the sources delve;
Off-shoot and top will wither of itself.
Thus thought the Minister, until a doubt
Whether the Bâb's mere death, as seen or told,
With secret circumstance, or seeming rout,
Would not just largely swell the alien fold.

Prince Mirza Taghy little guessed his rank;
He pictured him a charlatan, gross-grown;
Vulgar and ignorant, a mountebank—
Too weak to plan, too cowardly to command;
Great while unseen, and powerful while unknown
To credulous ignorance, throughout the land.
Unseen, unheard, a halo round his head,
His power were greater as a martyr, dead,
Than living; even were his death believed:
His taking off would nothing have achieved
Unless a moral ruin he were shown;
An abject craven, pleading for his life;
A heretic retracting; then the knife
Might fall with profit; but enquiry proved
To Mirza Taghy, his ingenious plan
Failed in one point—the prophet was a man
Mighty in argument, at heart serene:
Disquieted, he conjured up a scene—
The priests confounded, jubilant their foes;
Too great the risk; due caution much behooved;
Let gates of Tabreez fortress keep him close.

Prince Hamze Mirza, governor of that fort,
With other three, essayed a doubtful task—
To refute the doctrine by the Bâb proposed;

But even Mussulmen could see 'twere sport
Mirza Mohammed made, of one and all:
The argument was most abruptly closed;
—In eastern countries might is right—why ask
A fitter time and place? His head shall fall!

With two disciples, who his prison shared,
At early morning, loaded down with chains,
They left the citadel; the streets and lanes,
The market-place, were trod; abuse unspared
From mob and soldiers, elbowing each for place
To taunt, and strike the martyrs in the face,
Followed their march for many weary hours.
Afterward (mockery of judicial powers)
They are condemned before tribunals three
For felony; and death the penalty.

The stormy closing scenes upon this day
Recall more sacred story—the mock trial—
The outburst of blind fury—the denial
By loved and trusted friend—for toward the close
Seid Houssein, staggering, drunken with his woes,
Half dead with suffering, dropt to the ground
And begged for mercy; he was dragged around
To face his Master, weak and worn as he:
Asked:—"Will you curse him, if we set you free?"
Houssein did so: "Now spit you in his face!"
The craven, thus completing his disgrace,
They struck his chains, and left him in the road;
And onward the tumultuous concourse flowed.

Delighted with this unforeseen success,
The officers the last disciple press.
Young, rich, with everything his heart desired,
Surely he too will yield: he was required
To face his wife and children, for whom his heart
Had hungered long: O! it was hard to part,

To turn deaf ear to entreaty to remain
And cherish them: but he was sterner stuff
Than Seid Houssein; the entreaty was in vain.

Back to the citadel as sinks the sun
Thunders the rabble; eager, every one,
Two human forms suspended to descry
Athwart the wall with ropes 'twixt earth and sky.
The worn disciple makes his final plea:
"Master, and art thou satisfied with me?"
The deadly volley silenced the reply;
One life it severed, and the other's cords;
He dropt to earth: On every tongue the words
"A miracle!" were ready to be spoken—
"Divine!" "A prophet!" "this whereof the token."
Had he but claimed it there before them all,
The reigning dynasty must quake and fall,
As multitudes responded to his call.
He claimed it not; the lengthened agony
Had done its work; he uttered not one cry,
But blinded, stupefied, instinctively
Besought a refuge through an open door
Hard by: one, following, struck him to the floor,
The soldiers came—and his young life is o'er.

V.

Conclusion.

And Mirza Taghy now could sleep in peace,
And trusted peace would settle on the land.
Never did more delusive hope expand;
By his own act disruption will increase.
"Who is this King and Minister in power?
Sovereigns legitimate, the Prophet's seed?
No! 'tho they rule us, mongrel is the breed;
Beside these dwarfs, the *Seyds* as giants tower.
Mirza Ali Mohammed was a *Seyd*

By both lines of descent; a man of God;
A man of peace; who ruled not with the rod;
'Tho he obeyed, they slew him in their pride.
We owe no more allegiance."
Round and round
This creed is circulated, near and far.
The Bâb's successor had forbidden war,
But hot, rebellious converts still were found;
And thus a year had scarcely passed away
Ere Mirza Taghy rude reminder gains
He sleeps above explosives for his pains.
The King, while traveling a summer's day
Is fired upon, and wounded; one is slain,
Two captured; cheerfully these declare
Their youth and fortunes, yes, they are aware
That they must die; that were not loss, but gain.

Suspicion counseled measures prompt and sure;
Teheran's gates are closed and sentineled,
Detectives shadow every meeting held,
All Bâbists caught, must suffer or abjure.
Forty are quickly captured, young and old,
Among them "Consolation-of-the-Eyes"—
The search stopped here abruptly; were it wise
To scent great disaffection in the fold?
There may be thousands more; where will it end?
Learn first how far this faith has taken root;
A smouldering volcano underfoot,
Each fears his neighbor, and suspects his friend.

The judges thought intelligence to gain
Of who, and where, how many, were the rest;
Put to the torture, still not one confessed;
Mute were the captives; treating with disdain
The bribe, the threat, the flattery, or the pain;
About themselves—if they must die, 'twere well;
About the rest—they nothing had to tell.

The case was graver than at first supposed;
The wonderful endurance thus disclosed,
The strange new faith that made weak women strong,
Children heroic—might it not be wrong,
Unwise, 'gainst such, a needless zeal to show?
Would they abjure, or simply answer, No
To careless question—just a form, a show,
The Shah, quite satisfied, will let them go.

But failure met the judges here as well;
First with Gourret-ûl-ain; her powerful friend
The Mahmond Khan, returning from the court,
Told her he had most welcome news to tell.
"For you, to-morrow will the judges send;
Question:—'Are you a Bâbist?' and report.
Just answer No, you will not be believed;
All know you are one—no one is deceived—
Nothing more will be asked—you will be free."
And she:—"Than this, 'tis better far for me;
You do not know the news to-morrow brings;
To-morrow noon will grant me glorious things;
Thyself will kindleth my funeral fire;
But mine the honor, ere I shall expire,
To witness publicly for God, the slain
His Sublime Highness, and eternal gain.
And now, O! Mahmond Khan, hear what I say,
And let my death to-morrow be the sign
I speak the truth; O! squander not the day:
The King you serve will not reward thy zeal;
He'll cause thy death with cruelty and design;*
Search out the truth, and find eternal weal."

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*This prophecy, like the last, might possibly tend to work out its own fulfillment; indeed, in Persia it needed little penetration to foretell the sudden taking off of political favorites. Nevertheless, it is worth recording that some years later, it became a fact in the experience of the humane Mahmond Khan.

And as she sayeth, it all came to pass.
Asked of her faith, exultant she declares
Cause of her hope, and altar of her prayers,
Object beloved, while she have life and breath.
Nothing remains—they sentence her to death.

A heap of plaited straw, and woven grass,
Stacked in the market-place, where crowds assail;
The meshes of the long abandoned veil
Hiding the head so beautiful and young;
As a last act of mercy, ere the fire
The stranglers—then upon the funeral pyre—
Cindered to ashes—to the winds aflung.

Not different the record of the rest,
In that they all did witness with their lives.
And there were sons and daughters, husbands, wives,
Among them Seyd Houssein, he the unblest
Apostate on the day the Bâb was slain;
But now athirst the martyr's crown to gain.
They all refused the proffered open door
To freedom—greater freedom lay before.

Base Persecutors! canst thou fear or feel?
Why chafest that thy victims will not kneel?
Why crave a triumph never yet thine own?
A grain of incense on an altar thrown—
A mock salute to God of myth or stone?
Is it that thou wouldst spare a noble life,
Seen yet unfogged by soul-obscuring strife?
No! 'tis to captive at thy chariot wheel
The semblant shadow, failing of the real,
To sop thy pride, thy vanity to heal!

Teheran's streets had often tasted blood;
Yet not at once will she forget the day,
When these last Bâbist martyrs passed her way.
Their wounds, garnished with blazing tow; the flood

Life-giving, welling, purpling the stones;
Humble and patient, yet as victors proud;
Amid the awe-struck silence of the crowd
That lined the way, singing in joyful tones:
"Truly, yes, truly we belong to God.
From God we came, look upon our return."

Not for each other's sufferings they mourn;
And when the weaklings fell, they onward trod
As if they marked not, 'tho 'twas their own child.
A brutal soldier tells a father there
(Hoping to kindle something like despair)
"Upon thy breast I'll slay thy little son."
Perhaps even yet, some have not faced the worst—
The heroic man stretched forth his arms and smiled;
A bright-eyed lad of fourteen forward prest,
Threw his charred members on the father's breast—
"Father! the eldest I, let me be first."
A look of love and faith supreme—one kiss—
And as the brute suggested, it was done.
Nothing could conquer courage like to this!

Finished at last! and the calm summer night
Fell on a hideous, mangled, bloody mass,
To which there trooped the dogs—a ravening horde.
The martyrs' heads were hung in public sight,
Grim witnesses, to whosoe'er might pass.
My task is done—the public record ends.
The King saw his mistake, and made amends
After his fashion; question not, nor pry,
Into the secret strength of faith profound;
The dogs of war must other hunting ground—
Let sleeping canines slumber—pass them by.
'Twas breathed there were a hundred thousand more
Throughout the kingdom—'twas a subject sore
To those in power; 'twas seldom touched upon.
The tale is told—in part; the years roll on.

Yet not unmoved shall the tale be heard,
While men shall thirst to hear a prophet's word,
While shrinking flesh to torture shall be given,
Freely, yea, joyfully, for promised heaven,
While blood and treasure, measureless, unsold,
Shall be as water poured, for fairy gold,
Yes, yet while many, failing Hope—Belief,
Dubious of Joy, superior to Grief,
Find yet in Action, insecure relief.

—March 4, 1898.

MY SWEETHEARTS.

With boyish heart I wooed the birds and flowers,
The songs and blossoms all my very own,
But winter left me cold and silent bowers,
The flowers all dead, my tuneful sweethearts flown.

I drifted here and there on Life's broad sea,
My boat a prey to storms, without control,
My only wish some font of sympathy,
At which to slake the thirstings of my soul.

In one of Eva's daughters, young and fair,
I thought to find this wondrous gift of Heaven,
Instead, I found when well within the snare,
Girls do not know their hearts at ten and seven.

A while I studied every changing mood,
To-day all smiles, to-morrow cold and strange,
Then my half famished heart cried out for food,
The Idol that I worship must not change.

Priestess of Song! sweet Maid! melodious Muse!
Waiting these years *my* fickle roving heart,
'Tis thine to-day; ah! no, do not refuse,
I'll now be faithful, thy faith's counterpart.

Yes, found at last a sweetheart fond and true,
How fond, how true, my pen can not portray,
Yet, while for me the summer sky is blue,
My heart shall sing her praises every day.

This mystic bond, this sweet captivity,
Only *my* faithlessness can e'er destroy,
In every tuneful voice she speaks to me
Sharing my toil and rest, my grief, my joy.

A royal Maid, she proudly doth demand
A whole heart's homage, a deep contempt of gold,
And promiseth nothing: yet with generous hand,
Requiteth all my love a thousand fold.

THE STREET URCHIN.

A bright and fearless little fellow,
A dirty, tearless, little fellow,
Shoeless, graceless, out at elbow,
Yet shall he and I be friends.

Eager he in quest of knowledge,
(Not always as taught at college)
Old, yet youthful, blunt, defiant,
Yet to kindness quick unbends.

Underneath that tattered jacket,
Where the city's soot won't black it
Lurks a sense of faith and duty,
Noble deeds, unselfish ends.

MY VERY DEAREST FRIEND.

"My very dearest friend,"
The sweetest, holiest name
This heart can claim.

Perhaps thou wouldst disown
This tie, to manhood grown?
I would not blame.

Our life streams run apart,
Thy throbbing brain and heart
Know not my need.

Yet while my life remain
I'll bear through sun and rain,
That precious seed

We planted long ago
Though winter's frost and snow
Thy name defend.

If this should meet thine eye,
Deal gently with the memory
Of.....thy friend.

A FANCY OF THE NIGHT.

I dreamed I floated on a raft
Adown a river swift and wide,
The day was fair, the wind was aft,
We careless drifted down the tide.

But, as the river swifter grew,
I know not how the scene was changed;
The laughing crowd in haste withdrew,
I, and one female form remained.

In front I spied a rocky shore,
The river did not further flow,
But down a cleft with deafening roar
The waters sought the depths below.

The raft towards the rocks made haste,
The maiden trembling sought my side,
I clasped my arm about her waist,
In death to wed my unknown bride.

With gurgling crash we're cast ashore
Past, safely past, the wave's alarms,
And, wondrous joy unknown before,
'Twas *thee* I clasped within my arms.

TO ————————

Fair fortune doth frown for I crave not her treasure,
'Twere useless, I know, for she favors but few,
Yet I humbly ask leave of thy sweet gracious pleasure,
To love thee, sweet maid, with love constant and true.

Yet, for fear fickle fortune should foully endeavor
To foil me, by saying, "this is not his due,"
I have ventured—forgive me—without asking whether,
To love thy sweet self with love constant and true.

When I thrill with the magic evoked by thy fingers
More favored admirers I heedlessly view,
No room for anght else where thy glad presence lingers
As long as this fond heart is constant and true.

I ask not, fair maid, for sweet smiles or shy glances,
Though daring to love, I aspire not to woo;
But blest be my labors and rest, if it chances
That *thou* dost believe I am constant and true.

THE LIBRARIAN.

With noiseless step across the floor,
She brings the volume I desired,
With a sweet grace I feel the more,
Her eyes so plainly say, "Quite tired?"

And, that I may without delay
Solve a small doubt, she hands me down
A generous handful, though to-day
I know she's busy: yet no frown.

Silent she serves the overwise,
With kindness she assists the fool,
On children smiles with loving eyes,
Ever one's friend, but no one's tool.

So often asked to break the rules,
So oft provoked by broken ones,
Teaching and studying in life's schools,
And through *so many* moons and suns.

I'm not a lover of my kind,
I'm prone to carp and criticise,
Yet, if the lady does not mind,
She'll join my treasured memories.

THE REFUSAL.

I would not cloud thy summer sky
With any shadow from my own,
Or dim that laughter loving eye
With tears mine only should have known.

I would not reap with ruthless hand
The smiling fields that thou didst seed,
Or bid thee to a barren land,
All grown with thistle, burr and weed.

Not 'till my fields are broad and fair,
Not 'till my name bestows renown,
Will I, presumptuous, ask to share
Thy loving heart and queenly crown.

RAINY DAYS.

("Into each life some rain must fall.")

I idly plucked a blooming flower,
It withered in a short half hour,
Why did I ruthless rob the bower
So heedlessly.

I caged a curious butterfly,
I watched it droop, I saw it die,
Why did I bar it from the sky
So needlessly.

I fondly loved a maiden fair,
My humble lot she would not share,
And Oh! she drove me to despair
So smilingly.

I had a friend, he shared my heart,
Death rudely hurried us apart,
Ah! why this last most cruel dart
That pierceth me.

Is *all* within that coffin hid?
Flowers, butterflies, and heart, all dead?
Yes, they are dead, yet still I bid
Me call these vain regrets—

To winter's threat the spring replies,
The frozen brooklet sings again,
And oft the sunny azure skies
Smile above frost and pain.

WHY?

Is it because thy face is sweet and fair?
Because thy hair's a glossy silken snare
To enthrall my heart?
Is it because thy hand, of matchless form,
Is soft, and white, and talented and warm,
Thrilling with tuneful art?
Is it thy winning ways or sunny smile,
Thy stately dignity, thy faultless style
That weaves this spell?
Or shall I never know the hidden springs
Of this sweet pain, of which each poet sings?
Ah! thou shalt tell.

INSECT VOICES.

'Neath a golden harvest moon
Forth I wander with delight,
While a tiny fairy tune,
Steals upon the air of night.

Tiny voices clear and shrill,
Voices cheery, plaintive, gay,
Sound from meadow, marsh and hill,
Nature's Autumn roundelay.

Silent now the birds of spring
Swift to Southern shores they stray,
Other minstrels round us sing,
'Tis the insects' holiday.

Hear that plaintive alto voice!
'Tis the dusky Grasshopper,
While the dainty Cricket's choice
Is a chirp much livelier.

Long before the season's done,
Cold and damp will thin their ranks,
Though their race is nearly run,
Still they sing from sheltered banks.

When the hoar frost's crisp at dawn,
And the evening air grows chill,
Weak the minstrels on the lawn,
"Few and faint but fearless still."

One by one they silent grow,
And the snowflakes drape their bier,
But their children sleep below
Next bright Autumn to appear.

MOTHER: A POEM.

Dedication: To that uncounted, countless throng—earth's mothers;
First to my own, and then to all the others.

I.

The Record.

Forty years it stands to-day:*
Forty years beloved! nor hated
Smallest fraction of the way
Night or storm! O! never-sated
Hungered, yearning, heart-relief,
Vestal flame, unmatched, unmated,
Light the sight less can perceive,
Bit of heaven to earth translated,
Woman's might, and woman's weakness,
Woman's pride, and lowly meekness,
Jealous, 'tho unselfish wholly,
—Often scourged far worse than folly,
Universal, of all stations,
Free of Tongues, Creeds, Races, Nations,
Simple—just itself—none other—
The devotion of a Mother!

II.

The Baby.

Why do we call Mamma's wee darling "little stranger"?
Stranger to me, to you perhaps, but not to her;
Close to her heart the secret grew for many days;

*This poem in part, and without apology, is frankly personal to the author.

Hidden, the mystery expanded into bloom;
Chastened by suffering the offering was made meet;—
Radiant Daughter of Hope, the New Life's Burden Bearer,
To thee no human life is strange—, thou know'st us all!

(Cradle Song.)

Baby, baby,
Mamma rocks the cradle;
Maybe, maybe,
'Till in sleep the shades fall.

Trusting, knowing,
All the earth her neighbors;
Rocking, sewing,—
Light and sweet such labors.

Smiles abeaming,
From May meads the lambs call;
Dreaming, dreaming,
O'er wee eyes the shades fall.

III.

Birthdays.

All round the year like a garland they twine,
Gift-day, and Hope-day, with health pledged in wine,
Mamma's long-waited-for, red-letter days,
Keep with a loving observance always.

Spring, and the first-born, and gladdening sunshine;
March and the bluebird; his carol and mine;
Autumn—the vintage—our last and our best;
December and January claim all the rest.

"I HEAR IT, MAMA"

First-born is First—'till the second appears;
"I'll love this best," says Mamma Twenty-years;
Forty-years smiles, but with no thought of blame:—
"Eight have I borne,—I loved each one the same."

Days of new youth to the old and the young,
Natal days! welcome the smile and the song;
Days with new hope and new promise to cheer,
Mamma's-days! Keep them the days of the year!

IV.

The Heroic in Unimagined Lives.

Tales of heroines and heroes,
How the childish heart commends them!
Hugs them to that heart unquestioned—
Multiplies, transmutes, extends them.
Doubt lopped ne'er one silken tassel,
Razed one grim enchanter's castle;
Bid a Princess or a lover
Rashly leave the twilight cover;
From one twilight to another
They will "keep the place" for mother;
Confident again to hold them—
"*Sure!* had not *Mamma* told them?"

Simple hearts! so trusting, loyal,
Breathless for the battle royal,
"Mad," if Bluebeard dies too easily,
Mamma's pleasure 'tis to please thee.
So she never tells the story,
—Fraught with pain and strange to glory—
Story not of giant unruly,
But of things that happened truly.

When our fair young state was younger,
When Dame Plenty's lap was empty
Sometimes, and Health out of season,
When the wolf, real or symbolic,
Roamed the wild, and at the cottage-
Door made weird, blood-curdling howlings,
When to Toil was wedded Hunger,
In an unfamiliar landscape,
Through a wilderness scarce-traveled,
Four long days of foot-sore journey,
In her arms a four-months' baby,
A young mother of the people,
Forty miles pressed forward bravely.

Little thing, as now remembered,
Light as jest wellnigh forgotten,
Not to be compared to other
Glorious deeds that fiction blazons;
Just a mother very weary—
Just an infant wailing feebly.
One thing links it to the present,
One thing makes the record precious,
The recorder's lip to tremble,
This:—The lady, O! so weary,
That was Mamma now so cheery;
And the babe that cried "hoo hoo," sir,
Little roguish-eyes, 'twas *you*, sir!

V.

Mamma's Naughty Boys.

He knows the taste of Mamma's love,
And any tricks he'll foil;
He does not aloes take, or salts,

Rhubarb, or castor oil.
He'd tied her tail; she scratched him some-
(Better'n Tom—she bit his thumb.)
But bravely to her side he slid,
To hear what naughty Tommy did:—

"Within the oven immured the cat,
The kitten in the churn;
'Monstrus!' saith Papa, 'what is that?'
Each face showed much concern.
'Was that roast dead?' (this to the cook)
Here Tommy slunk away,
And pussy from the fire they took,
Her nine lives saved that day."

"Now Mamma's boy would not do that,
And singe the pretty pussy cat
Until her fur would smell?"
"O! no," quoth Johnny cheerfully,
"I'll put her in the well!"

VI.

Fogiveness.

The Mother's heart will always find the way
To pardon and take back the erring child;
Unlocked, ajar, that portal night and day,
And within, light and warmth; while generous piled
Divinest traits, distinctively her own:—
Under injustice more of sorrow shown,
And less a blind instinctive sense of wrong;
With feebler will, affection true as strong;
And so completely she in others doth live,
She deems it rapturous duty to forgive.

"Forgive—forget!" few o'er the last make haste,
All know the difference who have transgressed.
Forgiveness with no bitter aftertaste,
Nor lurking sense of injury unconfessed,
Self-righteous pose, or chill superior mien,
Perfect and whole; a gracious suppliant queen
Asking thy favor! Grace once more renew!
Thy mother shares thy shame, and spares it, too!

VII.

Life.

"Felix, at what a price we live!"

Nothing for naught: we cannot choose but pay.
A careless joy, its offset, too, is cheap.
What her heart asked, she saw it straightway done—
Her children scarce were ill within her memory;
And now she's gone.
Was gladness hers all day?
If joy, she sadness hath.
She pictures sickness—sorrow in the path,
And beyond that—not wide, but dreaded deep—
The "narrow sea."

Privileged boon of wed estate,
Its joys are many;
They should be.
For all too soon
Comes death.
Life is a trembling breath,
Shuddering 'twixt bliss and swoon.
The heart that throbs, doth bleed:
The Mother's joy is very great, indeed;
So is the agony.

THE CROSS, A MARBLE PRAYER

VIII.

"These Twenty Years."

The snowdrops nestle there,
The cross—a marble prayer,
Rises, divinely fair
Above his head;

The shadow comes and goes,
The grass but sparsely grows,
One frail "dear wilding rose"
Blossoms, dew-fed;

The pine trees overhead
A perfumed coolness spread,
We pass, with muffled tread
Upon their leaves;

Of sound, the calm suspense,
Life's turmoil has gone hence,
'Round every tired sense
Still sweetness weaves.

* * *

Cut down before his prime,
Scarce blossomed in this clime,
And Manhood's words unsaid.

Gone, but remembered yet;
What mother can forget
The birthday of her dead?

Few will need Barrie's art
To devine the tender grace;
They read it in her face—
She keeps it in her heart.

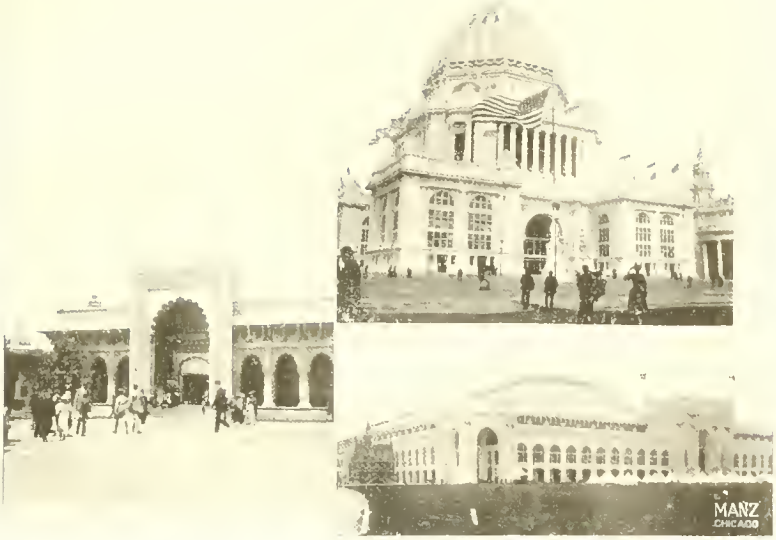
IX.

The Picture.

A mighty nation's year of holiday
Full of white dreams of mimic palace walls,
And miracles of glass and iron halls
Was slipping by; a cripple made his way
From the more densely packed domain of art
Up to the balcony; and there, apart
Before a canvas large, there clustered close
Some score, their wrapt regard as like repose:
He joined the silent throng, himself was hushed—
Then swift as summer storm, the hot tears rushed.

The central figure, calm and self-possessed,
—The mighty surgeon, frankly self-confessed—
The stupor'd living clay beneath his hand—
Think you that *these* the flood-gates so command?
No! (for a man himself) he feared not blood;
But to the right from where the surgeon stood
A woman, shuddering, shrank upon the floor,
Wretched and old; worn hands her face before
Clawed back the horror offered to her sight;
He sees but this—and transformed; in the light
Of breathless mem'ry, 'tho the years are dim;—
His mother she, that silent form was *him!*

He lay like that within the hospital;—
Imagination works—why part not all?
Thus would she suffer while he could not soothe;
Suffer for both, her deathless love to prove,
The while he slumbered, knowing naught of pain:
Ah! there *are* things he would not have again—
The ether's throttling draught,—no more! no more!
'Tis mercy mothers are denied the door.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And from the mighthy Fair he brought away
Something that tarries with him night and day;
He nevermore can see gray hair uncoiled,
Those crooked fingers that for him have toiled,
Eyes growing dim, 'tho sightful yet of pain,
But Eakins' canvas visits him again.
"The scene is false; the treatment, too, astray."
'Tis granted—yes; dear critic turn away,
Or turn, and that even yet thou mayst be wise,
Read deeper truths in the spectator's eyes.
What matters that the brushwork might be ill?
Sadness' salt font it to the brim could fill!

X.

The Ministering Angel.

In the black tower hangs a silvery bell,
Ponderous and rugged, swung 'mid bats and gloom;
From child to grandsire everyone knows well
Its peal of joy, its tolling to the tomb,
Its counting of their hours and their days:
And if for sloth, or other care or toil,
—Good cause or bad—the sexton late delays
To reel the cord, the wheels on wheels to oil,
Old Sol and Luna on its record gain.

He heard it, fettered to his bed of pain,
But could not make it out; for in the race
From morn to morn, together all kept pace.
What was the matter? was the sun run down?
Was every sexton lazy in the town,
The moon anapping, and Times' hour-glass slow?
Then anguish blots—he could not answer now—
He guessed it later, when health came again.

Dwell not too much upon a long past night:
Dwell not so lightly that you nothing learn.
Even now that bell is sounding from the height,—
"Hold fast the good, nor dread the ill return."
Even now that silvery chime a wraith evokes:—
The hearing ears, 'tho weariness o'erpowers—
Slow centuries between its counted hours,
As hours, as days, the silence 'twcen its strokes.

But through them, service—living, loving, warm—
Unseen with eyes, with ears unheard—but there
Silent and watchful; lest the quick despair
Of pain intolerable, work for harm.

* * *

Blessed the morning, after night of pain;
A cause for joy, both bright, the past, and dim;
Blessed the sun-calm after storm and rain;
Thrice blest the son whose mother's spared to him.

XI.

Divergence.

Hast thou knelt at mother's knee
In the years when Time seemed wasteful
Of his hours? then follow me,
Come! it should not prove distasteful
If yet sad—for life is so:
Only lights and shadows blending,
Crossing, flitting to and fro,
Only the procession, ending
Not to-day, or yet next year.
—Silence hides the date it started—
Mothers—children: brush a tear
That they ever should be parted.

Teacher: "Can you tell me,
Children, how I look, together?

What is it that mamma says?
Part of the Eternal Story.
What is it that mamma prays?
Mamma's boy shall see its glory;
Be with her forever blest,
—Blessedness uncomprehended—;
Share with her a perfect rest,
When the toil of time is ended.
Linking this, not understood,
To that life past understanding,—
(Wonder, Faith, and Hope seem good
To the rare new life expanding,)
Every night and every day,
In all lands, in every weather,
Teaching baby lips to pray,
Clasping baby hands together,
Lisping speech's sweet intent,
Guiding sure, 'tho slowly, rather,
One, and yet as different—
Earthly Papa, Heavenly Father—
Who will judge one mother's wrong?
Poor mad fool! his heart is blighted.
Yet the time will come ere long—
Even now's divergence sighted—
Childish wonder—boyish question;
Youthful questioning,—man's demand;
Mother's love a fulfilled promise,
Why not other promise stand?
Who athirst will pass the font?
See! the sons of men apanting
Toil both up and down the mount
Parched and fevered; wanting—wanting,
By the doorway of the grot
They may vainly pause and parley,
"Open Sesame" forgot,
Bootless here to tender "barley"—

Mother! not for that thy son
Spurns thy faith; 'twere his, and gladly,
Could it be: not all in one
Faith were taught; and so, 'tho sadly,
Each must seek unto his need:
Not even mother's love can vanquish
Yearnings for the perfect creed
Sought and found not, 'tho in anguish
Spent the night and sped the day,
Tasting, proving, weighing, doubting,
From companions of the way,
Harkening bitter, senseless flouting,
Blaming not *her* glad assent,
Never claiming they're above her,
Only—only different,
Thirsting more because they love her,
Fearful, dreading tender ties
Under stress, were broke asunder,
Passing blind where safety lies,
Feeling all a horrid blunder;
All these ('tho the heart keep warm)
Harrowing memories that so cling,
Alienate the outward form;—
If they loveth less, 'twere as nothing.

XII.

Heartbreak.

O! stupid weights,
O! measures vain,
Questionings, doubtings, reasons plain
These many years:
Logic,—a schooled and ordered brain,
Conviction,—ah! *here* gives the pain;
Against it all—*just mother's tears.*

Speak gently, friend,
If in thy sight
The breaking heart pause in the fight,
And Truth appears
In truth a dim and fitful light;
Right merged in Wrong, and Day with Night
The while he sees poor mother's tears.

XIII.

Convergence.

Sabine maids, but Roman matrons,
Saved their husbands and their brothers;
Mothers—always war's worst patrons—
Yet will save beyond these mothers.

Think not naught this century needs
Must find true hearts (that long impelled them)
Softened much toward many creeds,
Wonderfully, toward those who held them.

Hate compels, while love impels us;
Seek such paths where bickerings cease.
Paths of peace lie all around us—
Paths of duty, and of peace.

Mother! first thy sweet intent;
Each his own way forward striving;
One, and yet as different—
And the good is all surviving.

XIV.

Conclusion.

Fullest heart wins faltering tongue;
Weakly, brokenly, I've sung,
Commonplace, poor words I've spoken
Of my own; of hers, slight token;
Yet will not, may not disguise
Miracle, nor show surprise
If pure gold to mother's eyes,

What were vanity of speech,
Craft's conceited utmost reach,
Waking dream, or nightly round,
Sounds, that sounding, only sound,
Or allusion, rhyme, mismated;
When in language of her heart,
With its higher, holier art,
Read as wondrously translated?

Mother's sons! as friends and brothers
Harken! love that love of mothers.
Shame not lads to take it all—
Honor *thine* as thus beholden;
But—be all deceit above;
Ask thyselves a question small—
Could'st thou, would'st thou have thy love
Passed for gold, nor make it golden?

—The Glen, March 14, 1890.

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